

PART IV.

JUNE.

ONE SHILLING.

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BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

With Illustrations

BY

J. E. MILLAIS.



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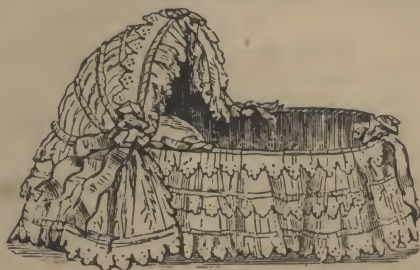
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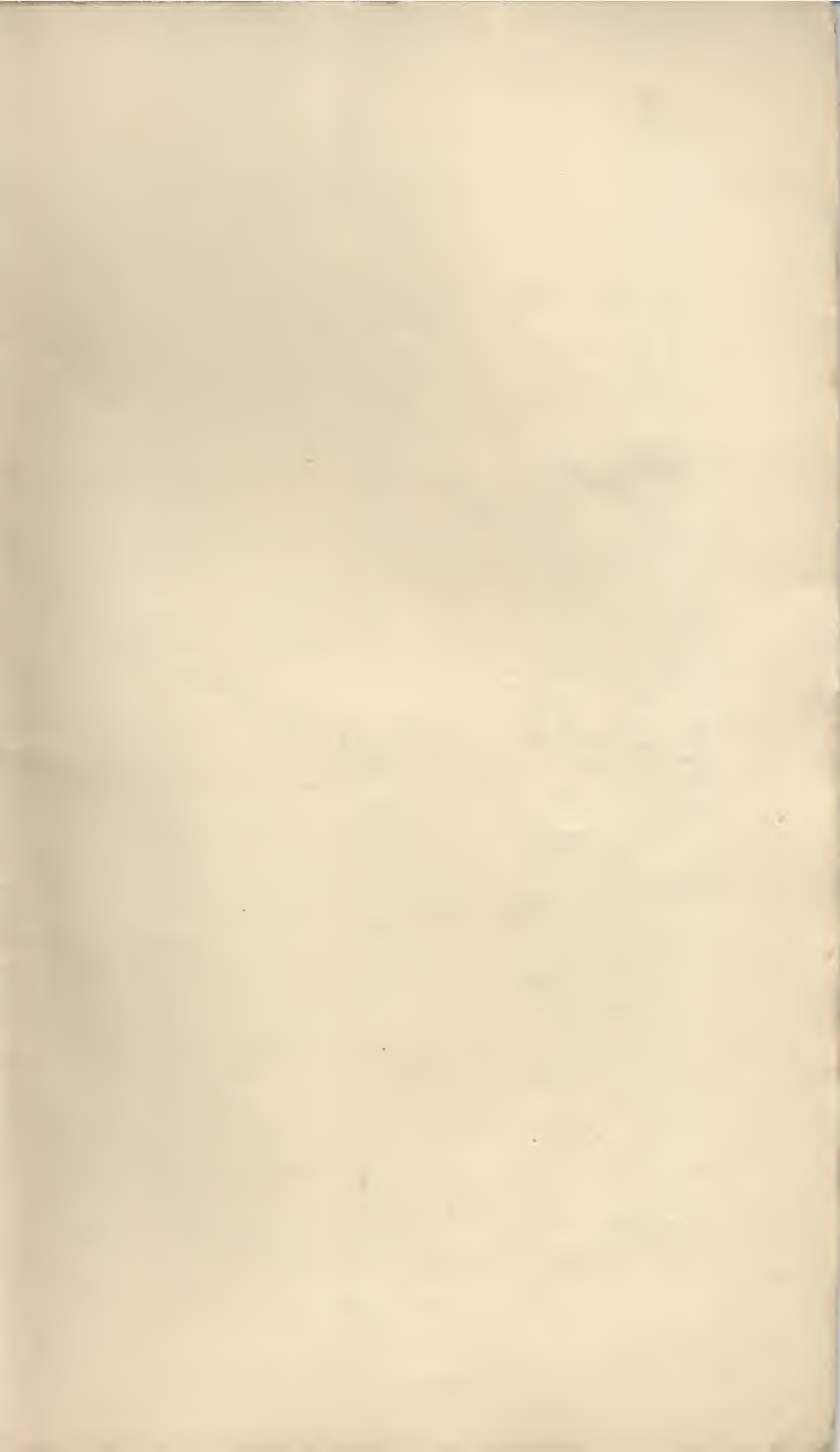
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"Your son Lucrus did say—shopping."



CHAPTER XIII.

GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY.

UNFORTUNATELY for Mr. Furnival, the intruder was Mrs. Furnival—whether he pleased or whether he did not please. There she was in his law chamber, present in the flesh, a sight pleasing neither to her husband nor to her husband's client. She had knocked at the outside door, which, in the absence of the fag, had been opened by Mr. Crabwitz, and had immediately walked across the passage towards her husband's room, expressing her knowledge that Mr. Furnival was within. Mr. Crabwitz had all the will in the world to stop her progress, but he found that he lacked the power to stay it for a moment.

The advantages of matrimony are many and great—so many and so great, that all men, doubtless, ought to marry. But even matrimony may have its drawbacks; among which unconcealed and undeserved jealousy on the part of the wife is perhaps as disagreeable as any. What is a man to do when he is accused before the world,—before any small fraction of the world, of making love to some lady of his acquaintance? What is he to say? What way is he to look? ‘My love, I didn’t. I never did, and wouldn’t think of it for worlds. I say it with my hand on my heart. There is Mrs. Jones herself, and I appeal to her.’ He is reduced to that! But should any innocent man be so reduced by the wife of his bosom?

I am speaking of undeserved jealousy, and it may therefore be thought that my remarks do not apply to Mrs. Furnival. They do apply to her as much as to any woman. That general idea as to the strange goddesses was on her part no more than a suspicion; and all women who so torment themselves and their husbands may plead as much as she could. And for this peculiar idea as to Lady Mason she had no ground whatever. Lady Mason may have had her faults, but a propensity to rob Mrs. Furnival of her husband's affections had not hitherto been one of them. Mr. Furnival was a clever lawyer, and she had great need of his assistance; therefore she had come to his chambers, and therefore she had placed her hand in his. That Mr. Furnival liked his client because she was good looking may be true. I like my horse, my picture, the view

from my study window for the same reason. I am inclined to think that there was nothing more in it than that.

‘My dear!’ said Mr. Furnival, stepping a little back, and letting his hands fall to his sides. Lady Mason also took a step backwards, and then with considerable presence of mind recovered herself and put out her hand to greet Mrs. Furnival.

‘How do you do, Lady Mason?’ said Mrs. Furnival, without any presence of mind at all. ‘I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you very well. I did hear that you were to be in town—shopping; but I did not for a moment expect the—gratification of finding you here.’ And every word that the dear, good, heart-sore woman spoke, told the tale of her jealousy as plainly as though she had flown at Lady Mason’s cap with all the bold demonstrative energy of Spitalfields or St. Giles.

‘I came up on purpose to see Mr. Furnival about some unfortunate law business,’ said Lady Mason.

‘Oh, indeed! Your son Lucius did say—shopping.’

‘Yes; I told him so. When a lady is unfortunate enough to be driven to a lawyer for advice, she does not wish to make it known. I should be very sorry if my dear boy were to guess that I had this new trouble; or, indeed, if any one were to know it. I am sure that I shall be as safe with you, dear Mrs. Furnival, as I am with your husband.’ And she stepped up to the angry matron, looking earnestly into her face.

To a true tale of woman’s sorrow Mrs. Furnival’s heart could be as soft as snow under the noonday sun. Had Lady Mason gone to her and told her all her fears and all her troubles, sought counsel and aid from her, and appealed to her motherly feelings, Mrs. Furnival would have been urgent night and day in persuading her husband to take up the widow’s case. She would have bade him work his very best without fee or reward, and would herself have shown Lady Mason the way to Old Square, Lincoln’s Inn. She would have been discreet too, speaking no word of idle gossip to any one. When he, in their happy days, had told his legal secrets to her, she had never gossiped,—had never spoken an idle word concerning them. And she would have been constant to her friend, giving great consolation in the time of trouble, as one woman can console another. The thought that all this might be so did come across her for a moment, for there was innocence written in Lady Mason’s eyes. But then she looked at her husband’s face; and as she found no innocence there, her heart was again hardened. ‘The woman’s face could lie;—‘the faces of such women are all lies,’ Mrs. Furnival said to herself;—but in her presence his face had been compelled to speak the truth.

‘Oh dear, no; I shall say nothing of course,’ she said. ‘I am quite sorry that I intruded. Mr. Furnival, as I happened to be in

Holborn—at Mudie's for some books—I thought I would come down and ask whether you intend to dine at home to-day. You said nothing about it either last night or this morning; and nowadays one really does not know how to manage in such matters.'

'I told you that I should return to Birmingham this afternoon; I shall dine there,' said Mr. Furnival, very sulkily.

'Oh, very well. I certainly knew that you were going out of town. I did not at all expect that you would remain at home; but I thought that you might, perhaps, like to have your dinner before you went. Good morning, Lady Mason; I hope you may be successful in your—lawsuit.' And then, curtsying to her husband's client, she prepared to withdraw.

'I believe I have said all that I need say, Mr. Furnival,' said Lady Mason; 'so that if Mrs. Furnival wishes—,' and she also gathered herself up as though she were ready to leave the room.

'I hardly know what Mrs. Furnival wishes,' said the husband.

'My wishes are nothing,' said the wife, 'and I really am quite sorry that I came in.' And then she did go, leaving her husband and the woman of whom she was jealous once more alone together. Upon the whole I think that Mr. Furnival was right in not going home that day to his dinner.

As the door closed somewhat loudly behind the angry lady—Mr. Crabwitz having rushed out hardly in time to moderate the violence of the slam—Lady Mason and her imputed lover were left looking at each other. It was certainly hard upon Lady Mason, and so she felt it. Mr. Furnival was fifty-five, and endowed with a bluish nose; and she was over forty, and had lived for twenty years as a widow without incurring a breath of scandal.

'I hope I have not been to blame,' said Lady Mason in a soft, sad voice; 'but perhaps Mrs. Furnival specially wished to find you alone.'

'No, no; not at all.'

'I shall be so unhappy if I think that I have been in the way. If Mrs. Furnival wished to speak to you on business I am not surprised that she should be angry, for I know that barristers do not usually allow themselves to be troubled by their clients in their own chambers.'

'Nor by their wives,' Mr. Furnival might have added, but he did not.

'Do not mind it,' he said; 'it is nothing. She is the best-tempered woman in the world; but at times it is impossible to answer even for the best tempered.'

'I will trust you to make my peace with her.'

'Yes, of course; she will not think of it after to-day; nor must you, Lady Mason.'

'Oh, no; except that I would not for the world be the cause of

annoyance to my friends. Sometimes I am almost inclined to think that I will never trouble any one again with my sorrows, but let things come and go as they may. Were it not for poor Lucius I should do so.'

Mr. Furnival, looking into her face, perceived that her eyes were full of tears. There could be no doubt as to their reality. Her eyes were full of genuine tears, brimming over and running down; and the lawyer's heart was melted. 'I do not know why you should say so,' he said. 'I do not think your friends begrudge any little trouble they may take for you. I am sure at least that I may so say for myself.'

'You are too kind to me; but I do not on that account the less know how much it is I ask of you.'

"The labour we delight in physics pain," said Mr. Furnival gallantly. 'But, to tell the truth, Lady Mason, I cannot understand why you should be so much out of heart. I remember well how brave and constant you were twenty years ago, when there really was cause for trembling.'

'Ah, I was younger then.'

'So the almanac tells us; but if the almanac did not tell us I should never know it. We are all older, of course. Twenty years does not go by without leaving its marks, as I can feel myself.'

'Men do not grow old as women do, who live alone and gather rust as they feed on their own thoughts.'

'I know no one whom time has touched so lightly as yourself, Lady Mason; but if I may speak to you as a friend——'

'If you may not, Mr. Furnival, who may?'

'I should tell you that you are weak to be so despondent, or rather so unhappy.'

'Another lawsuit would kill me, I think. You say that I was brave and constant before, but you cannot understand what I suffered. I nerved myself to bear it, telling myself that it was the first duty that I owed to the babe that was lying on my bosom. And when standing there in the Court, with that terrible array around me, with the eyes of all men on me, the eyes of men who thought that I had been guilty of so terrible a crime, for the sake of that child who was so weak I could be brave. But it nearly killed me. Mr. Furnival, I could not go through that again; no, not even for his sake. If you can save me from that, even though it be by the buying off of that ungrateful man——'

'You must not think of that.'

'Must I not? ah me!'

'Will you tell Lucius all this, and let him come to me?'

'No; not for worlds. He would defy every one, and glory in the fight; but after all it is I that must bear the brunt. No; he shall not know it;—unless it becomes so public that he must know it.'

And then, with some further pressing of the hand, and further words of encouragement which were partly tender as from the man, and partly forensic as from the lawyer, Mr. Furnival permitted her to go, and she found her son at the chemist's shop in Holborn as she had appointed. There were no traces of tears or of sorrow in her face as she smiled on Lucius while giving him her hand, and then when they were in a cab together she asked him as to his success at Liverpool.

'I am very glad that I went,' said he, 'very glad indeed. I saw the merchants there who are the real importers of the article, and I have made arrangements with them.'

'Will it be cheaper so, Lucius?'

'Cheaper! not what women generally call cheaper. If there be anything on earth that I hate, it is a bargain. A man who looks for bargains must be a dupe or a cheat, and is probably both.'

'Both, Lucius. Then he is doubly unfortunate.'

'He is a cheat because he wants things for less than their value; and a dupe because, as a matter of course, he does not get what he wants. I made no bargain at Liverpool,—at least, no cheap bargain; but I have made arrangements for a sufficient supply of a first-rate unadulterated article at its proper market price, and I do not fear but the results will be remunerative.' And then, as they went home in the railway carriage the mother talked to her son about his farming as though she had forgotten her other trouble, and she explained to him how he was to dine with Sir Peregrine.

'I shall be delighted to dine with Sir Peregrine,' said Lucius, 'and very well pleased to have an opportunity of talking to him about his own way of managing his land; but, mother, I will not promise to be guided by so very old-fashioned a professor.'

Mr. Furnival, when he was left alone, sat thinking over the interview that had passed. At first, as was most natural, he thought himself of his wife; and I regret to say that the love which he bore to her, and the gratitude which he owed to her, and the memory of all that they had suffered and enjoyed together, did not fill his heart with thoughts towards her as tender as they should have done. A black frown came across his brow as he meditated on her late intrusion, and he made some sort of resolve that that kind of thing should be prevented for the future. He did not make up his mind how he would prevent it,—a point which husbands sometimes overlook in their marital resolutions. And then, instead of counting up her virtues, he counted up his own. Had he not given her everything; a house such as she had not dreamed of in her younger days? servants, carriages, money, comforts, and luxuries of all sorts? He had begrudged her nothing, had let her have her full share of all his hard-earned gains; and yet she could be ungrateful for all this, and allow her head to be filled with

whims and fancies as though she were a young girl,—to his great annoyance and confusion. He would let her know that his chambers, his law chambers, should be private even from her. He would not allow himself to become a laughing-stock to his own clerks and his own brethren through the impertinent folly of a woman who owed to him everything;—and so on! I regret to say that he never once thought of those lonely evenings in Harley Street, of those long days which the poor woman was doomed to pass without the only companionship which was valuable to her. He never thought of that vow which they had both made at the altar, which she had kept so loyally, and which required of him a cherishing, comforting, enduring love. It never occurred to him that in denying her this he as much broke his promise to her as though he had taken to himself in very truth some strange goddess, leaving his wedded wife with a cold ceremony of alimony or such-like. He had been open-handed to her as regards money, and therefore she ought not to be troublesome! He had done his duty by her, and therefore he would not permit her to be troublesome! Such, I regret to say, were his thoughts and resolutions as he sat thinking and resolving about Mrs. Furnival.

And then, by degrees, his mind turned away to that other lady, and they became much more tender. Lady Mason was certainly both interesting and comely in her grief. Her colour could still come and go, her hand was still soft and small, her hair was still brown and smooth. There were no wrinkles in her brow though care had passed over it; her step could still fall lightly, though it had borne a heavy weight of sorrow. I fear that he made a wicked comparison—a comparison that was wicked although it was made unconsciously.

But by degrees he ceased to think of the woman and began to think of the client, as he was in duty bound to do. What was the real truth of all this? Was it possible that she should be alarmed in that way because a small country attorney had told his wife that he had found some old paper, and because the man had then gone off to Yorkshire? Nothing could be more natural than her anxiety, supposing her to be aware of some secret which would condemn her if discovered;—but nothing more unnatural if there were no such secret. And she must know! In her bosom, if in no other, must exist the knowledge whether or no that will were just. If that will were just, was it possible that she should now tremble so violently, seeing that its justice had been substantially proved in various courts of law? But if it were not just—if it were a forgery, a forgery made by her, or with her cognizance—and that now this truth was to be made known! How terrible would that be! But terrible is not the word which best describes the idea as it entered Mr. Furnival's mind. How wonderful would it be; how wonderful

would it all have been! By whose hand in such case had those signatures been traced? Could it be possible that she, soft, beautiful, graceful as she was now, all but a girl as she had then been, could have done it, unaided,—by herself?—that she could have sat down in the still hour of the night, with that old man on one side and her baby in his cradle on the other, and forged that will, signatures and all, in such a manner as to have carried her point for twenty years,—so skilfully as to have baffled lawyers and jurymen and resisted the eager greed of her cheated kinsman? If so, was it not all wonderful! Had not she been a woman worthy of wonder!

And then Mr. Furnival's mind, keen and almost unerring at seizing legal points, went eagerly to work, considering what new evidence might now be forthcoming. He remembered at once the circumstances of those two chief witnesses, the clerk who had been so muddle-headed, and the servant-girl who had been so clear. They had certainly witnessed some deed, and they had done so on that special day. If there had been a fraud, if there had been a forgery, it had been so clever as almost to merit protection! But if there had been such fraud, the nature of the means by which it might be detected became plain to the mind of the barrister,—plainer to him without knowledge of any circumstances than it had done to Mr. Mason after many of such circumstances had been explained to him.

But it was impossible. So said Mr. Furnival to himself, out loud;—speaking out loud in order that he might convince himself. It was impossible, he said again; but he did not convince himself. Should he ask her? No; it was not on the cards that he should do that. And perhaps, if a further trial were forthcoming, it might be better for her sake that he should be ignorant. And then, having declared again that it was impossible, he rang his bell. 'Crabwitz,' said he, without looking at the man, 'just step over to Bedford Row, with my compliments, and learn what is Mr. Round's present address;—old Mr. Round, you know.'

Mr. Crabwitz stood for a moment or two with the door in his hand, and Mr. Furnival, going back to his own thoughts, was expecting the man's departure. 'Well,' he said, looking up and seeing that his myrmidon still stood there.

Mr. Crabwitz was not in a very good humour, and had almost made up his mind to let his master know that such was the case. Looking at his own general importance in the legal world, and the inestimable services which he had rendered to Mr. Furnival, he did not think that that gentleman was treating him well. He had been summoned back to his dingy chamber almost without an excuse, and now that he was in London was not permitted to join even for a day the other wise men of the law who were assembled at the great congress. For the last four days his heart had been yearning

to go to Birmingham, but had yearned in vain; and now his master was sending him about town as though he were an errand-lad.

‘Shall I step across to the lodge and send the porter’s boy to Round and Crook’s?’ asked Mr. Crabwitz.

‘The porter’s boy! no; go yourself; you are not busy. Why should I send the porter’s boy on my business?’ The fact probably was, that Mr. Furnival forgot his clerk’s age and standing. Crabwitz had been ready to run anywhere when his employer had first known him, and Mr. Furnival did not perceive the change.

‘Very well, sir; certainly I will go if you wish it;—on this occasion that is. But I hope, sir, you will excuse my saying——’

‘Saying what?’

‘That I am not exactly a messenger, sir. Of course I’ll go now, as the other clerk is not in.’

‘Oh, you’re too great a man to walk across to Bedford Row, are you? Give me my hat, and I’ll go.’

‘Oh, no, Mr. Furnival, I did not mean that. I’ll step over to Bedford Row, of course:—only I did think——’

‘Think what?’

‘That perhaps I was entitled to a little more respect, Mr. Furnival. It’s for your sake as much as my own that I speak, sir; but if the gentlemen in the Lane see me sent about like a lad of twenty, sir, they’ll think——’

‘What will they think?’

‘I hardly know what they’ll think, but I know it will be very disagreeable, sir;—very disagreeable to my feelings. I did think, sir, that perhaps——’

‘I’ll tell you what it is, Crabwitz, if your situation here does not suit you, you may leave it to-morrow. I shall have no difficulty in finding another man to take your place.’

‘I am sorry to hear you speak in that way, Mr. Furnival, very sorry—after fifteen years, sir——’

‘You find yourself too grand to walk to Bedford Row!’

‘Oh, no. I’ll go now, of course, Mr. Furnival.’ And then Mr. Crabwitz did go, meditating as he went many things to himself. He knew his own value, or thought that he knew it; and might it not be possible to find some patron who would appreciate his services more justly than did Mr. Furnival?

CHAPTER XIV.

DINNER AT THE CLEEVE.

LADY MASON on her return from London found a note from Mrs. Orme asking both her and her son to dine at The Cleeve on the following day. As it had been already settled between her and Sir Peregrine that Lucius should dine there in order that he might be talked to respecting his mania for guano, the invitation could not be refused; but, as for Lady Mason herself, she would much have preferred to remain at home.

Indeed, her uneasiness on that guano matter had been so outweighed by worse uneasiness from another source, that she had become, if not indifferent, at any rate tranquil on the subject. It might be well that Sir Peregrine should preach his sermon, and well that Lucius should hear it; but for herself it would, she thought, have been more comfortable for her to eat her dinner alone. She felt, however, that she could not do so. Any amount of tedium would be better than the danger of offering a slight to Sir Peregrine, and therefore she wrote a pretty little note to say that both of them would be at The Cleeve at seven.

'Lucius, my dear, I want you to do me a great favour,' she said as she sat by her son in the Hamworth fly.

'A great favour, mother! of course I will do anything for you that I can.'

'It is that you will bear with Sir Peregrine to-night.'

'Bear with him! I do not know exactly what you mean. Of course I will remember that he is an old man, and not answer him as I would one of my own age.'

'I am sure of that, Lucius, because you are a gentleman. As much forbearance as that a young man, if he be a gentleman, will always show to an old man. But what I ask is something more than that. Sir Peregrine has been farming all his life.'

'Yes; and see what are the results! He has three or four hundred acres of uncultivated land on his estate, all of which would grow wheat.'

'I know nothing about that,' said Lady Mason.

'Ah, but that's the question. My trade is to be that of a farmer,

and you are sending me to school. Then comes the question, Of what sort is the schoolmaster ?

‘ I am not talking about farming now, Lucius.’

‘ But he will talk of it.’

‘ And cannot you listen to him without contradicting him—for my sake ? It is of the greatest consequence to me,—of the very greatest, Lucius, that I should have the benefit of Sir Peregrine’s friendship.’

‘ If he would quarrel with you because I chanced to disagree with him about the management of land, his friendship would not be worth having.’

‘ I do not say that he will do so ; but I am sure you can understand that an old man may be tender on such points. At any rate I ask it from you as a favour. You cannot guess how important it is to me to be on good terms with such a neighbour.’

‘ It is always so in England,’ said Lucius, after pausing for a while. ‘ Sir Peregrine is a man of family, and a baronet ; of course all the world, the world of Hamworth that is, should bow down at his feet. And I too must worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Fashion, has set up !’

‘ Lucius, you are unkind to me.’

‘ No, mother, not unkind ; but like all men, I would fain act in such matters as my own judgment may direct me.’

‘ My friendship with Sir Peregrine Orme has nothing to do with his rank ; but it is of importance to me that both you and I should stand well in his sight.’ There was nothing more said on the matter ; and then they got down at the front door, and were ushered through the low wide hall into the drawing-room.

The three generations of the family were there,—Sir Peregrine, his daughter-in-law, and the heir. Lucius Mason had been at The Cleeve two or three times since his return from Germany, and on going there had always declared to himself that it was the same to him as though he were going into the house of Mrs. Arkwright, the doctor’s widow at Hamworth,—or even into the kitchen of Farmer Greenwood. He rejoiced to call himself a democrat, and would boast that rank could have no effect on him. But his boast was an untrue boast, and he could not carry himself at The Cleeve as he would have done and did in Mrs. Arkwright’s little drawing-room. There was a majesty in the manner of Sir Peregrine which did awe him ; there were tokens of birth and a certain grace of manner about Mrs. Orme which kept down his assumption ; and even with young Peregrine he found that though he might be equal he could by no means be more than equal. He had learned more than Peregrine Orme, had ten times more knowledge in his head, had read books of which Peregrine did not even know the names and probably never would know them ; but on his side also young Orme possessed

something which the other wanted. What that something might be Lucius Mason did not at all understand.

Mrs. Orme got up from her corner on the sofa to greet her friend, and with a soft smile and two or three all but whispered words led her forward to the fire. Mrs. Orme was not a woman given to much speech or endowed with outward warmth of manners, but she could make her few words go very far; and then the pressure of her hand, when it was given, told more than a whole embrace from some other women. There are ladies who always kiss their female friends, and always call them 'dear.' In such cases one cannot but pity her who is so bekissed. Mrs. Orme did not kiss Lady Mason, nor did she call her dear; but she smiled sweetly as she uttered her greeting, and looked kindness out of her marvellously blue eyes; and Lucius Mason, looking on over his mother's shoulders, thought that he would like to have her for his friend in spite of her rank. If Mrs. Orme would give him a lecture on farming it might be possible to listen to it without contradiction; but there was no chance for him in that respect. Mrs. Orme never gave lectures to any one on any subject.

'So, Master Lucius, you have been to Liverpool, I hear,' said Sir Peregrine.

'Yes, sir—I returned yesterday.'

'And what is the world doing at Liverpool?'

'The world is wide awake there, sir.'

'Oh, no doubt; when the world has to make money it is always wide awake. But men sometimes may be wide awake and yet make no money;—may be wide awake, or at any rate think that they are so.'

'Better that, Sir Peregrine, than wilfully go to sleep when there is so much work to be done.'

'A man when he's asleep does no harm,' said Sir Peregrine.

'What a comfortable doctrine to think of when the servant comes with the hot water at eight o'clock in the morning!' said his grandson.

'It is one that you study very constantly, I fear,' said the old man, who at this time was on excellent terms with his heir. There had been no apparent hankering after rats since that last compact had been made, and Peregrine had been doing great things with the H. H.; winning golden opinions from all sorts of sportsmen, and earning a great reputation for a certain young mare which had been bred by Sir Peregrine himself. Foxes are vermin as well as rats, as Perry in his wickedness had remarked; but a young man who can break an old one's heart by a predilection for rat-catching may win it as absolutely and irretrievably by prowess after a fox. Sir Peregrine had told to four different neighbours how a fox had been run into, in the open, near Alston, after twelve desperate miles,

and how on that occasion Peregrine had been in at the death with the huntsman and only one other. 'And the mare, you know, is only four years old and hardly half trained,' said Sir Peregrine, with great exultation. 'The young scamp, to have ridden her in that way!' It may be doubted whether he would have been a prouder man or said more about it if his grandson had taken honours.

And then the gong sounded, and Sir Peregrine led Lady Mason into the dining-room. Lucius, who as we know thought no more of the Ormes than of the Joneses and Smiths, paused in his awe before he gave his arm to Mrs. Orme; and when he did so he led her away in perfect silence, though he would have given anything to be able to talk to her as he went. But he bethought himself that unfortunately he could find nothing to say. And when he sat down it was not much better. He had not dined at The Cleeve before, and I am not sure whether the butler in plain clothes and the two men in livery did not help to create his confusion,—in spite of his well-digested democratic ideas.

The conversation during dinner was not very bright. Sir Peregrine said a few words now and again to Lady Mason, and she replied with a few others. On subjects which did not absolutely appertain to the dinner, she perhaps was the greatest talker; but even she did not say much. Mrs. Orme as a rule never spoke unless she were spoken to in any company consisting of more than herself and one other; and young Peregrine seemed to imagine that carving at the top of the table, asking people if they would take stewed beef, and eating his own dinner, were occupations quite sufficient for his energies. 'Have a bit more beef, Mason; do. If you will, I will.' So far he went in conversation, but no farther while his work was still before him.

When the servants were gone it was a little better, but not much. 'Mason, do you mean to hunt this season?' Peregrine asked.

'No,' said the other.

'Well, I would if I were you. You will never know the fellows about here unless you do.'

'In the first place I can't afford the time,' said Lucius, 'and in the next place I can't afford the money.' This was plucky on his part, and it was felt to be so by everybody in the room; but perhaps had he spoken all the truth, he would have said also that he was not accustomed to horsemanship.

'To a fellow who has a place of his own as you have, it costs nothing,' said Peregrine.

'Oh, does it not?' said the baronet; 'I used to think differently.'

'Well; not so much, I mean, as if you had everything to buy. Besides, I look upon Mason as a sort of a Cræsus. What on earth

has he got to do with his money? And then as to time;—upon my word I don't understand what a man means when he says he has not got time for hunting.'

'Lucius intends to be a farmer,' said his mother.

'So do I,' said Peregrine. 'By Jove, I should think so. If I had two hundred acres of land in my own hand I should not want anything else in the world, and would never ask any one for a shilling.'

'If that be so, I might make the best bargain at once that ever a man made,' said the baronet. 'If I might take you at your word, Master Perry——'

'Pray don't talk of it, sir,' said Mrs. Orme.

'You may be quite sure of this, my dear—that I shall not do more than talk of it.' Then Sir Peregrine asked Lady Mason if she would take any more wine; after which the ladies withdrew, and the lecture commenced.

But we will in the first place accompany the ladies into the drawing-room for a few minutes. It was hinted in one of the first chapters of this story that Lady Mason might have become more intimate than she had done with Mrs. Orme, had she so pleased it; and by this it will of course be presumed that she had not so pleased. All this is perfectly true. Mrs. Orme had now been living at The Cleeve the greater portion of her life, and had never while there made one really well-loved friend. She had a sister of her own, and dear old friends of her childhood, who lived far away from her in the northern counties. Occasionally she did see them, and was then very happy; but this was not frequent with her. Her sister, who was married to a peer, might stay at The Cleeve for a fortnight, perhaps once in the year; but Mrs. Orme herself seldom left her own home. She thought, and certainly not without cause, that Sir Peregrine was not happy in her absence, and therefore she never left him. Then, living there so much alone, was it not natural that her heart should desire a friend?

But Lady Mason had been living much more alone. She had no sister to come to her, even though it were but once a year. She had no intimate female friend, none to whom she could really speak with the full freedom of friendship, and it would have been delightful to have bound to her by ties of love so sweet a creature as Mrs. Orme, a widow like herself,—and like herself a widow with one only son. But she, warily picking her steps through life, had learned the necessity of being cautious in all things. The countenance of Sir Peregrine had been invaluable to her, and might it not be possible that she should lose that countenance? A word or two spoken now and then again, a look not intended to be noticed, an altered tone, or perhaps a change in the pressure of the old man's hand, had taught Lady Mason to think that he might dis-

approve such intimacy. Probably at the moment she was right, for she was quick at reading such small signs. It behoved her to be very careful, and to indulge in no pleasure which might be costly; and therefore she had denied herself in this matter,—as in so many others.

But now it had occurred to her that it might be well to change her conduct. Either she felt that Sir Peregrine's friendship for her was too confirmed to be shaken, or perhaps she fancied that she might strengthen it by means of his daughter-in-law. At any rate she resolved to accept the offer which had once been tacitly made to her, if it were still open to her to do so.

'How little changed your boy is!' she said when they were seated near to each other, with their coffee-cups between them.

'No; he does not change quickly; and, as you say, he is a boy still in many things. I do not know whether it may not be better that it should be so.'

'I did not mean to call him a boy in that sense,' said Lady Mason.

'But you might; now your son is quite a man.'

'Poor Lucius! yes; in his position it is necessary. His little bit of property is already his own; and then he has no one like Sir Peregrine to look out for him. Necessity makes him manly.'

'He will be marrying soon, I dare say,' suggested Mrs. Orme.

'Oh, I hope not. Do you think that early marriages are good for young men?'

'Yes, I think so. Why not?' said Mrs. Orme, thinking of her own year of married happiness. 'Would you not wish to see Lucius married?'

'I fancy not. I should be afraid lest I should become as nothing to him. And yet I would not have you think that I am selfish.'

'I am sure that you are not that. I am sure that you love him better than all the world besides. I can feel what that is myself.'

'But you are not alone with your boy as I am. If he were to send me from him, there would be nothing left for me in this world.'

'Send you from him! Ah, because Orley Farm belongs to him. But he would not do that; I am sure he would not.'

'He would do nothing unkind; but how could he help it if his wife wished it? But nevertheless I would not keep him single for that reason;—no, nor for any reason if I knew that he wished to marry. But it would be a blow to me.'

'I sincerely trust that Peregrine may marry early,' said Mrs. Orme, perhaps thinking that babies were preferable either to rats or foxes.

'Yes, it would be well I am sure, because you have ample means, and the house is large; and you would have his wife to love.'

‘If she were nice it would be so sweet to have her for a daughter. I also am very much alone, though perhaps not so much as you are, Lady Mason.’

‘I hope not—for I am sometimes very lonely.’

‘I have often thought that.’

‘But I should be wicked beyond everything if I were to complain, seeing that Providence has given me so much that I had no right to expect. What should I have done in my loneliness if Sir Peregrine’s hand and door had never been opened to me?’ And then for the next half-hour the two ladies held sweet converse together, during which we will go back to the gentlemen over their wine.

‘Are you drinking claret?’ said Sir Peregrine, arranging himself and his bottles in the way that was usual to him. He had ever been a moderate man himself, but nevertheless he had a business-like way of going to work after dinner, as though there was a good deal to be done before the drawing-room could be visited.

‘No more wine for me, sir,’ said Lucius.

‘No wine!’ said Sir Peregrine the elder.

‘Why, Mason, you’ll never get on if that’s the way with you,’ said Peregrine the younger.

‘I’ll try at any rate,’ said the other.

‘Water-drinker, moody thinker,’ and Peregrine sang a word or two from an old drinking-song.

‘I am not quite sure of that. We Englishmen I suppose are the moodiest thinkers in all the world, and yet we are not so much given to water-drinking as our lively neighbours across the Channel.’

Sir Peregrine said nothing more on the subject, but he probably thought that his young friend would not be a very comfortable neighbour. His present task, however, was by no means that of teaching him to drink, and he struck off at once upon the business he had undertaken. ‘So your mother tells me that you are going to devote all your energies to farming.’

‘Hardly that, I hope. There is the land, and I mean to see what I can do with it. It is not much, and I intend to combine some other occupation with it.’

‘You will find that two hundred acres of land will give you a good deal to do;—that is if you mean to make money by it.’

‘I certainly hope to do that,—in the long run.’

‘It seems to me the easiest thing in the world,’ said Peregrine.

‘You’ll find out your mistake some day; but with Lucius Mason it is very important that he should make no mistake at the commencement. For a country gentleman I know no prettier amusement than experimental farming;—but then a man must give up all idea of making his rent out of the land.’

‘I can’t afford that,’ said Lucius.

‘No; and that is why I take the liberty of speaking to you. I hope that the great friendship which I feel for your mother will be allowed to stand as my excuse.’

‘I am very much obliged by your kindness, sir; I am indeed.’

‘The truth is, I think you are beginning wrong. You have now been to Liverpool, to buy guano, I believe.’

‘Yes, that and some few other things. There is a man there who has taken out a patent——’

‘My dear fellow, if you lay out your money in that way, you will never see it back again. Have you considered in the first place what your journey to Liverpool has cost you?’

‘Exactly nine and sixpence per cent. on the money that I laid out there. Now that is not much more than a penny in the pound on the sum expended, and is not for a moment to be taken into consideration in comparison with the advantage of an improved market.’

There was more in this than Sir Peregrine had expected to encounter. He did not for a moment doubt the truth of his own experience or the folly and danger of the young man’s proceedings; but he did doubt his own power of proving either the one or the other to one who so accurately computed his expenses by percentages on his outlay. Peregrine opened his eyes and sat by, wondering in silence. What on earth did Mason mean by an improved market?

‘I am afraid then,’ said the baronet, ‘that you must have laid out a large sum of money.’

‘A man can’t do any good, Sir Peregrine, by hoarding his capital. I don’t think very much of capital myself——’

‘Don’t you?’

‘Not of the theory of capital;—not so much as some people do; but if a man has got it, of course it should be expended on the trade to which it is to be applied.’

‘But some little knowledge—some experience is perhaps desirable before any great outlay is made.’

‘Yes; some little knowledge is necessary,—and some great knowledge would be desirable if it were accessible;—but it is not, as I take it.’

‘Long years, perhaps, devoted to such pursuits——’

‘Yes, Sir Peregrine; I know what you are going to say. Experience no doubt will teach something. A man who has walked thirty miles a day for thirty years will probably know what sort of shoes will best suit his feet, and perhaps also the kind of food that will best support him through such exertion; but there is very little chance of his inventing any quicker mode of travelling.’

‘But he will have earned his wages honestly,’ said Sir Peregrine,

almost angrily. In his heart he was very angry, for he did not love to be interrupted.

'Oh, yes; and if that were sufficient we might all walk our thirty miles a day. But some of us must earn wages for other people, or the world will make no progress. Civilization, as I take it, consists in efforts made not for oneself but for others.'

'If you won't take any more wine we will join the ladies,' said the baronet.

'He has not taken any at all,' said Peregrine, filling his own glass for the last time and emptying it.

'That young man is the most conceited puppy it was ever my misfortune to meet,' said Sir Peregrine to Mrs. Orme, when she came to kiss him and to take his blessing as she always did before leaving him for the night.

'I am sorry for that,' said she, 'for I like his mother so much.'

'I also like her,' said Sir Peregrine; 'but I cannot say that I shall ever be very fond of her son.'

'I'll tell you what, mamma,' said young Peregrine, the same evening in his mother's dressing-room. 'Lucius Mason was too many for the governor this evening.'

'I hope he did not tease your grandfather.'

'He talked him down regularly, and it was plain enough that the governor did not like it.'

And then the day was over.

CHAPTER XV.

A MORNING CALL AT MOUNT PLEASANT VILLA.

On the following day Lady Mason made two visits, using her new vehicle for the first time. She would fain have walked had she dared; but she would have given terrible offence to her son by doing so. He had explained to her, and with some truth, that as their joint income was now a thousand a year, she was quite entitled to such a luxury; and then he went on to say that as he had bought it for her, he should be much hurt if she would not use it. She had put it off from day to day, and now she could put it off no longer.

Her first visit was by appointment at The Cleeve. She had promised Mrs. Orme that she would come up, some special purpose having been named;—but with the real idea, at any rate on the part of the latter, that they might both be more comfortable together than alone. The walk across from Orley Farm to The Cleeve had always been very dear to Lady Mason. Every step of it was over beautiful ground, and a delight in scenery was one of the few plea-

sures which her lot in life had permitted her to enjoy. But to-day she could not allow herself the walk. Her pleasure and delight must be postponed to her son's wishes! But then she was used to that.

She found Mrs. Orme alone, and sat with her for an hour. I do not know that anything was said between them which deserves to be specially chronicled. Mrs. Orme, though she told her many things, did not tell her what Sir Peregrine had said as he was going up to his bedroom on the preceding evening, nor did Lady Mason say much about her son's farming. She had managed to gather from Lucius that he had not been deeply impressed by anything that had fallen from Sir Peregrine on the subject, and therefore thought it as well to hold her tongue. She soon perceived also, from the fact of Mrs. Orme saying nothing about Lucius, that he had not left behind him any very favourable impression. This was to her cause of additional sorrow, but she knew that it must be borne. Nothing that she could say would induce Lucius to make himself acceptable to Sir Peregrine.

When the hour was over she went down again to her little carriage, Mrs. Orme coming with her to look at it, and in the hall they met Sir Peregrine.

'Why does not Lady Mason stop for lunch?' said he. 'It is past half-past one. I never knew anything so inhospitable as turning her out at this moment.'

'I did ask her to stay,' said Mrs. Orme.

'But I command her to stay,' said Sir Peregrine, knocking his stick upon the stone floor of the hall. 'And let me see who will dare to disobey me. John, let Lady Mason's carriage and pony stand in the open coach-house till she is ready.' So Lady Mason went back and did remain for lunch. She was painfully anxious to maintain the best-possible footing in that house, but still more anxious not to have it thought that she was intruding. She had feared that Lucius by his offence might have estranged Sir Peregrine against herself; but that at any rate was not the case.

After lunch she drove herself to Hamworth and made her second visit. On this occasion she called on one Mrs. Arkwright, who was a very old acquaintance, though hardly to be called an intimate friend. The late Mr. Arkwright—Dr. Arkwright as he used to be styled in Hamworth—had been Sir Joseph's medical attendant for many years, and therefore there had been room for an intimacy. No real friendship, that is no friendship of confidence, had sprung up; but nevertheless the doctor's wife had known enough of Lady Mason in her younger days to justify her in speaking of things which would not have been mentioned between merely ordinary acquaintance. 'I am glad to see you have got promotion,' said the old lady, looking out at Lady Mason's little phaeton on the gravel

sweep which divided Mrs. Arkwright's house from the street. For Mrs. Arkwright's house was Mount Pleasant Villa, and therefore was entitled to a sweep.

'It was a present from Lucius,' said the other, 'and as such must be used. But I shall never feel myself at home in my own carriage.'

'It is quite proper, my dear Lady Mason, quite proper. With his income and with yours I do not wonder that he insists upon it. It is quite proper, and just at the present moment peculiarly so.'

Lady Mason did not understand this; but she would probably have passed it by without understanding it, had she not thought that there was some expression more than ordinary in Mrs. Arkwright's face. 'Why peculiarly so at the present moment?' she said.

'Because it shows that this foolish report which is going about has no foundation. People won't believe it for a moment when they see you out and about, and happy-like.'

'What rumour, Mrs. Arkwright?' And Lady Mason's heart sunk within her as she asked the question. She felt at once to what it must allude, though she had conceived no idea as yet that there was any rumour on the subject. Indeed, during the last forty-eight hours, since she had left the chambers of Mr. Furnival, she had been more at ease within herself than during the previous days which had elapsed subsequent to the ill-omened visit made to her by Miriam Dockwrath. It had seemed to her that Mr. Furnival anticipated no danger, and his manner and words had almost given her confidence. But now,—now that a public rumour was spoken of, her heart was as low again as ever.

'Sure, haven't you heard?' said Mrs. Arkwright. 'Well, I wouldn't be the first to tell you, only that I know that there is no truth in it.'

'You might as well tell me now, as I shall be apt to believe worse than the truth after what you have said.'

And then Mrs. Arkwright told her. 'People have been saying that Mr. Mason is again going to begin those law proceedings about the farm; but I for one don't believe it.'

'People have said so!' Lady Mason repeated. She meant nothing; it was nothing to her who the people were. If one said it now, all would soon be saying it. But she uttered the words because she felt herself forced to say something, and the power of thinking what she might best say was almost taken away from her.

'I am sure I don't know where it came from,' said Mrs. Arkwright; 'but I would not have alluded to it if I had not thought that of course you had heard it. I am very sorry if my saying it has vexed you.'

'Oh, no,' said Lady Mason, trying to smile.

‘As I said before, we all know that there is nothing in it; and your having the pony chaise just at this time will make everybody see that you are quite comfortable yourself.’

‘Thank you, yes; good-bye, Mrs. Arkwright.’ And then she made a great effort, feeling aware that she was betraying herself, and that it behoved her to say something which might remove the suspicion which her emotion must have created. ‘The very name of that lawsuit is so dreadful to me that I can hardly bear it. The memory of it is so terrible to me, that even my enemies would hardly wish that it should commence again.’

‘Of course it is merely a report,’ said Mrs. Arkwright, almost trembling at what she had done.

‘That is all—at least I believe so. I had heard myself that some such threat had been made, but I did not think that any tidings of it had got abroad.’

‘It was Mrs. Whiting told me. She is a great busybody, you know.’ Mrs. Whiting was the wife of the present doctor.

‘Dear Mrs. Arkwright, it does not matter in the least. Of course I do not expect that people should hold their tongue on my account. Good-bye, Mrs. Arkwright.’ And then she got into the little carriage, and did contrive to drive herself home to Orley Farm.

‘Dear, dear, dear, dear!’ said Mrs. Arkwright to herself when she was left alone. ‘Only to think of that; that she should be knocked in a heap by a few words—in a moment, as we may say.’ And then she began to consider of the matter. ‘I wonder what there is in it! There must be something, or she would never have looked so like a ghost. What will they do if Orley Farm is taken away from them after all!’ And then Mrs. Arkwright hurried out on her daily little toddle through the town, that she might talk about this and be talked to on the same subject. She was by no means an ill-natured woman, nor was she at all inclined to direct against Lady Mason any slight amount of venom which might alloy her disposition. But then the matter was of such importance! The people of Hamworth had hardly yet ceased to talk of the last Orley Farm trial; and would it not be necessary that they should talk much more if a new trial were really pending? Looking at the matter in that light, would not such a trial be a godsend to the people of Hamworth? Therefore I beg that it may not be imputed to Mrs. Arkwright as a fault that she toddled out and sought eagerly for her gossips.

Lady Mason did manage to drive herself home; but her success in the matter was more owing to the good faith and propriety of her pony, than to any skilful workmanship on her own part. Her first desire had been to get away from Mrs. Arkwright, and having made that effort she was for a time hardly able to make any other. It was fast coming upon her now. Let Sir Peregrine say what

comforting words he might, let Mr. Furnival assure her that she was safe with ever so much confidence, nevertheless she could not but believe, could not but feel inwardly convinced, that that which she so dreaded was to happen. It was written in the book of her destiny that there should be a new trial.

And now, from this very moment, the misery would again begin. People would point at her, and talk of her. Her success in obtaining Orley Farm for her own child would again be canvassed at every house in Hamworth; and not only her success, but the means also by which that success had been obtained. The old people would remember and the young people would inquire; and, for her, tranquillity, repose, and that retirement of life which had been so valuable to her, were all gone.

There could be no doubt that Dockwrath had spread the report immediately on his return from Yorkshire; and had she well thought of the matter she might have taken some comfort from this. Of course he would tell the story which he did tell. His confidence in being able again to drag the case before the Courts would by no means argue that others believed as he believed. In fact the enemies now arraigned against her were only those whom she already knew to be so arraigned. But she had not sufficient command of her thoughts to be able at first to take comfort from such a reflection as this. She felt, as she was being carried home, that the world was going from her, and that it would be well for her, were it possible, that she should die.

But she was stronger when she reached her own door than she had been at Mrs. Arkwright's. There was still within her a great power of self-maintenance, if only time were allowed to her to look about and consider how best she might support herself. Many women are in this respect as she was. With forethought and summoned patience they can endure great agonies; but a sudden pang, unexpected, overwhelms them. She got out of the pony carriage with her ordinary placid face, and walked up to her own room without having given any sign that she was uneasy; and then she had to determine how she should bear herself before her son. It had been with her a great object that both Sir Peregrine and Mr. Furnival should first hear of the tidings from her, and that they should both promise her their aid when they had heard the story as she would tell it. In this she had been successful; and it now seemed to her that prudence would require her to act in the same way towards Lucius. Had it been possible to keep this matter from him altogether, she would have given much to do so; but now it would not be possible. It was clear that Mr. Dockwrath had chosen to make the matter public, acting no doubt with forethought in doing so; and Lucius would be sure to hear words which would become common in Hamworth. Difficult as the task

would be to her, it would be best that she should prepare him. So she sat alone till dinner-time planning how she would do this. She had sat alone for hours in the same way planning how she would tell her story to Sir Peregrine; and again as to her second story for Mr. Furnival. Those whose withers are unwrung can hardly guess how absolutely a sore under the collar will embitter every hour for the poor jade who is so tormented!

But she met him at dinner with a smiling face. He loved to see her smile, and often told her so, almost upbraiding her when she would look sad. Why should she be sad, seeing that she had everything that a woman could desire? Her mind was burdened with no heavy thoughts as to feeding coming multitudes. She had no contests to wage with the desultory chemists of the age. His purpose was to work hard during the hours of the day,—hard also during many hours of the night; and it was becoming that his mother should greet him softly during his few intervals of idleness. He told her so, in some words not badly chosen for such telling; and she, loving mother that she was, strove valiantly to obey him.

During dinner she could not speak to him, nor immediately after dinner. The evil moment she put off from half-hour to half-hour, still looking as though all were quiet within her bosom as she sat beside him with her book in her hand. He was again at work before she began her story: he thought at least that he was at work, for he had before him on the table both Prichard and Latham, and was occupied in making copies from some drawings of skulls which purposed to represent the cerebral development of certain of our more distant Asiatic brethren.

‘Is it not singular,’ said he, ‘that the jaws of men born and bred in a hunter state should be differently formed from those of the agricultural tribes?’

‘Are they?’ said Lady Mason.

‘Oh yes; the maxillary profile is quite different. You will see this especially with the Mongolians, among the Tartar tribes. It seems to me to be very much the same difference as that between a man and a sheep, but Prichard makes no such remark. Look here at this fellow; he must have been intended to eat nothing but flesh; and that raw, and without any knife or fork.’

‘I don’t suppose they had many knives or forks.’

‘By close observation I do not doubt that one could tell from a single tooth not only what food the owner of it had been accustomed to eat, but what language he had spoken. I say close observation, you know. It could not be done in a day.’

‘I suppose not.’ And then the student again bent over his drawing. ‘You see it would have been impossible for the owner of such a jaw as that to have ground a grain of corn between his teeth, or to have masticated even a cabbage.’

‘Lucius,’ said Lady Mason, becoming courageous on the spur of the moment, ‘I want you to leave that for a moment and speak to me.’

‘Well,’ said he, putting down his pencil and turning round. ‘Here I am.’

‘You have heard of the lawsuit which I had with your brother when you were an infant?’

‘Of course I have heard of it; but I wish you would not call that man my brother. He would not own me as such, and I most certainly would not own him. As far as I can learn he is one of the most detestable human beings that ever existed.’

‘You have heard of him from an unfavourable side, Lucius; you should remember that. He is a hard man, I believe; but I do not know that he would do anything which he thought to be unjust.’

‘Why then did he try to rob me of my property?’

‘Because he thought that it should have been his own. I cannot see into his breast, but I presume that it was so.’

‘I do not presume anything of the kind, and never shall. I was an infant and you were a woman,—a woman at that time without many friends, and he thought that he could rob us under cover of the law. Had he been commonly honest it would have been enough for him to know what had been my father’s wishes, even if the will had not been rigidly formal. I look upon him as a robber and a thief.’

‘I am sorry for that, Lucius, because I differ from you. What I wish to tell you now is this,—that he is thinking of trying the question again.’

‘What!—thinking of another trial now?’ and Lucius Mason pushed his drawings and books from him with a vengeance.

‘So I am told.’

‘And who told you? I cannot believe it. If he intended anything of the kind I must have been the first person to hear of it. It would be my business now, and you may be sure that he would have taken care to let me know his purpose.’

‘And then by degrees she explained to him that the man himself, Mr. Mason of Groby, had as yet declared no such purpose. She had intended to omit all mention of the name of Mr. Dockwrath, but she was unable to do so without seeming to make a mystery with her son. When she came to explain how the rumour had arisen and why she had thought it necessary to tell him this, she was obliged to say that it had all arisen from the wrath of the attorney. ‘He has been to Groby Park,’ she said, ‘and now that he has returned he is spreading this report.’

‘I shall go to him to-morrow, said Lucius, very sternly.

‘No, no; you must not do that. You must promise me that you will not do that.’

‘ But I shall. You cannot suppose that I shall allow such a man as that to tamper with my name without noticing it! It is my business now.’

‘ No, Lucius. The attack will be against me rather than you;—that is, if an attack be made. I have told you because I do not like to have a secret from you.’

‘ Of course you have told me. If you are attacked who should defend you, if I do not?’

‘ The best defence, indeed the only defence till they take some active step, will be silence. Most probably they will not do anything, and then we can afford to live down such reports as these. You can understand, Lucius, that the matter is grievous enough to me; and I am sure that for my sake you will not make it worse by a personal quarrel with such a man as that.’

‘ I shall go to Mr. Furnival,’ said he, ‘ and ask his advice.’

‘ I have done that already, Lucius. I thought it best to do so, when first I heard that Mr. Dockwrath was moving in the matter. It was for that that I went up to town.’

‘ And why did you not tell me?’

‘ I then thought that you might be spared the pain of knowing anything of the matter. I tell you now because I hear to-day in Hamworth that people are talking on the subject. You might be annoyed, as I was just now, if the first tidings had reached you from some stranger.’

He sat silent for a while, turning his pencil in his hand, and looking as though he were going to settle the matter off hand by his own thoughts. ‘ I tell you what it is, mother; I shall not let the burden of this fall on your shoulders. You carried on the battle before, but I must do so now. If I can trace any word of scandal to that fellow Dockwrath, I shall indict him for a libel.’

‘ Oh, Lucius!’

‘ I shall, and no mistake!’

What would he have said had he known that his mother had absolutely proposed to Mr. Furnival to buy off Mr. Dockwrath’s animosity, almost at any price?

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. DOCKWRATH IN BEDFORD ROW.

MR. DOCKWRATH, as he left Leeds and proceeded to join the bosom of his family, was not discontented with what he had done. It might not improbably have been the case that Mr. Mason would altogether refuse to see him, and having seen him, Mr. Mason might altogether have declined his assistance. He might have been forced as a witness to disclose his secret, of which he could make so much better a profit as a legal adviser. As it was, Mr. Mason had promised to pay him for his services, and would no doubt be induced to go so far as to give him a legal claim for payment. Mr. Mason had promised to come up to town, and had instructed the Hamworth attorney to meet him there; and under such circumstances the Hamworth attorney had but little doubt that time would produce a considerable bill of costs in his favour.

And then he thought that he saw his way to a great success. I should be painting the Devil too black were I to say that revenge was his chief incentive in that which he was doing. All our motives are mixed; and his wicked desire to do evil to Lady Mason in return for the evil which she had done to him was mingled with professional energy, and an ambition to win a cause that ought to be won—especially a cause which others had failed to win. He said to himself, on finding those names and dates among old Mr. Usbech's papers, that there was still an opportunity of doing something considerable in this Orley Farm Case, and he had made up his mind to do it. Professional energy, revenge, and money considerations would work hand in hand in this matter; and therefore, as he left Leeds in the second-class railway carriage for London, he thought over the result of his visit with considerable satisfaction.

He had left Leeds at ten, and Mr. Moulder had come down in the same omnibus to the station, and was travelling in the same train in a first-class carriage. Mr. Moulder was a man who despised the second-class, and was not slow to say so before other commercials who travelled at a cheaper rate than he did. 'Hubbles and Grease,' he said, 'allowed him respectably, in order that he might go about their business respectable; and he wasn't going to

give the firm a bad name by being seen in a second-class carriage, although the difference would go into his own pocket. 'That wasn't the way he had begun, and that wasn't the way he was going to end.' He said nothing to Mr. Dockwrath in the morning, merely bowing in answer to that gentleman's salutation. 'Hope you were comfortable last night in the back drawing-room,' said Mr. Dockwrath; but Mr. Moulder in reply only looked at him.

At the Mansfield station, Mr. Kantwise, with his huge wooden boxes, appeared on the platform, and he got into the same carriage with Mr. Dockwrath. He had come on by a night train, and had been doing a stroke of business that morning. 'Well, Kantwise,' Moulder holloed out from his warm, well-padded seat, 'doing it cheap and nasty, eh?'

'Not at all nasty, Mr. Moulder,' said the other. 'And I find myself among as respectable a class of society in the second-class as you do in the first; quite so;—and perhaps a little better,' Mr. Kantwise added, as he took his seat immediately opposite to Mr. Dockwrath. 'I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you pretty bobbish this morning, sir.' And he shook hands cordially with the attorney.

'Tidy, thank you,' said Dockwrath. 'My company last night did not do me any harm; you may swear to that.'

'Ha! ha! ha! I was so delighted that you got the better of Moulder; a domineering party, isn't he? quite terrible! For myself, I can't put up with him sometimes.'

'I didn't have to put up with him last night.'

'No, no; it was very good, wasn't it now? very capital, indeed. All the same I wish you'd heard Busby give us "Beautiful Venice, City of Song!" A charming voice has Busby; quite charming.' And there was a pause for a minute or so, after which Mr. Kantwise resumed the conversation. 'You'll allow me to put you up one of those drawing-room sets?' he said.

'Well, I am afraid not. I don't think they are strong enough where there are children.'

'Dear, dear; dear, dear; to hear you say so, Mr. Dockwrath! Why, they are made for strength. They are the very things for children, because they don't break, you know.'

'But they'd bend terribly.'

'By no means. They're so elastic that they always recovers themselves. I didn't show you that; but you might turn the backs of them chairs nearly down to the ground, and they will come straight again. You let me send you a set for your wife to look at. If she's not charmed with them I'll—I'll—I'll eat them.'

'Women are charmed with anything,' said Mr. Dockwrath. 'A new bonnet does that.'

'They know what they are about pretty well, as I dare say you

have found out. I'll send express to Sheffield and have a completely new set put up for you.'

'For twelve seventeen six, of course?'

'Oh! dear no, Mr. Dockwrath. The lowest figure for ready money, delivered free, is fifteen ten.'

'I couldn't think of paying more than Mrs. Mason.'

'Ah! but that was a damaged set; it was, indeed. And she merely wanted it as a present for the curate's wife. The table was quite sprung, and the music-stool wouldn't twist.'

'But you'll send them to me new?'

'New from the manufactory; upon my word we will.'

'A table that you have never acted upon—have never shown off on; standing in the middle, you know?'

'Yes; upon my honour. You shall have them direct from the workshop, and sent at once; you shall find them in your drawing-room on Tuesday next.'

'We'll say thirteen ten.'

'I couldn't do it, Mr. Dockwrath—' And so they went on, bargaining half the way up to town, till at last they came to terms for fourteen eleven. 'And a very superior article your lady will find them,' Mr. Kantwise said as he shook hands with his new friend at parting.

One day Mr. Dockwrath remained at home in the bosom of his family, saying all manner of spiteful things against Lady Mason, and on the next day he went up to town and called on Round and Crook. That one day he waited in order that Mr. Mason might have time to write; but Mr. Mason had written on the very day of the visit to Groby Park, and Mr. Round junior was quite ready for Mr. Dockwrath when that gentleman called.

Mr. Dockwrath when at home had again cautioned his wife to have no intercourse whatever 'with that swindler at Orley Farm,' wishing thereby the more thoroughly to imbue poor Miriam with a conviction that Lady Mason had committed some fraud with reference to the will. 'You had better say nothing about the matter anywhere; d' you hear? People will talk; all the world will be talking about it before long. But that is nothing to you. If people ask you, say that you believe that I am engaged in the case professionally, but that you know nothing further.' As to all which Miriam of course promised the most exact obedience. But Mr. Dockwrath, though he only remained one day in Hamworth before he went to London, took care that the curiosity of his neighbours should be sufficiently excited.

Mr. Dockwrath felt some little trepidation at the heart as he walked into the office of Messrs. Round and Crook in Bedford Row. Messrs. Round and Crook stood high in the profession, and were men who in the ordinary way of business would have had no

personal dealings with such a man as Mr. Dockwrath. Had any such intercourse become necessary on commonplace subjects Messrs. Round and Crook's confidential clerk might have seen Mr. Dockwrath, but even he would have looked down upon the Hamworth attorney as from a great moral height. But now, in the matter of the Orley Farm Case, Mr. Dockwrath had determined that he would transact business only on equal terms with the Bedford Row people. The secret was his—of his finding; he knew the strength of his own position, and he would use it. But nevertheless he did tremble inwardly as he asked whether Mr. Round was within;—or if not Mr. Round, then Mr. Crook.

There were at present three members in the firm, though the old name remained unaltered. The Mr. Round and the Mr. Crook of former days were still working partners;—the very Round and the very Crook who had carried on the battle on the part of Mr. Mason of Groby twenty years ago; but to them had been added another Mr. Round, a son of old Round, who, though his name did not absolutely appear in the nomenclature of the firm, was, as a working man, the most important person in it. Old Mr. Round might now be said to be ornamental and communicative. He was a hale man of nearly seventy, who thought a great deal of his peaches up at Isleworth, who came to the office five times a week—not doing very much hard work, and who took the largest share in the profits. Mr. Round senior had enjoyed the reputation of being a sound, honourable man, but was now considered by some to be not quite sharp enough for the practice of the present day.

Mr. Crook had usually done the dirty work of the firm, having been originally a managing clerk; and he still did the same—in a small way. He had been the man to exact penalties, look after costs, and attend to any criminal business, or business partly criminal in its nature, which might chance find its way to them. But latterly in all great matters Mr. Round junior, Mr. Matthew Round—his father was Richard—was the member of the firm on whom the world in general placed the greatest dependence. Mr. Mason's letter had in the ordinary way of business come to him, although it had been addressed to his father, and he had resolved on acting on it himself.

When Mr. Dockwrath called Mr. Round senior was at Birmingham, Mr. Crook was taking his annual holiday, and Mr. Round junior was reigning alone in Bedford Row. Instructions had been given to the clerks that if Mr. Dockwrath called he was to be shown in, and therefore he found himself seated, with much less trouble than he had expected, in the private room of Mr. Round junior. He had expected to see an old man, and was therefore somewhat confused, not feeling quite sure that he was in company with one of the principals; but nevertheless, looking at the room,

and especially at the arm-chair and carpet, he was aware that the legal gentleman who motioned him to a seat could be no ordinary clerk.

The manner of this legal gentleman was not, as Mr. Dockwrath thought, quite so ceremoniously civil as it might be, considering the important nature of the business to be transacted between them. Mr. Dockwrath intended to treat on equal terms, and so intending would have been glad to have shaken hands with his new ally at the commencement of their joint operations. But the man before him—a man younger than himself too—did not even rise from his chair. ‘Ah! Mr. Dockwrath,’ he said, taking up a letter from the table, ‘will you have the goodness to sit down?’ And Mr. Matthew Round wheeled his own arm-chair towards the fire, stretching out his legs comfortably, and pointing to a somewhat distant seat as that intended for the accommodation of his visitor. Mr. Dockwrath seated himself in the somewhat distant seat, and deposited his hat upon the floor, not being as yet quite at home in his position; but he made up his mind as he did so that he would be at home before he left the room.

‘I find that you have been down in Yorkshire with a client of ours, Mr. Dockwrath,’ said Mr. Matthew Round.

‘Yes, I have,’ said he of Hamworth.

‘Ah! well—; you are in the profession yourself, I believe?’

‘Yes; I am an attorney.’

‘Would it not have been well to have come to us first?’

‘No, I think not. I have not the pleasure of knowing your name, sir.’

‘My name is Round—Matthew Round.’

‘I beg your pardon, sir; I did not know,’ said Mr. Dockwrath, bowing. It was a satisfaction to him to learn that he was closeted with a Mr. Round, even if it were not the Mr. Round. ‘No, Mr. Round, I can’t say that I should have thought of that. In the first place I didn’t know whether Mr. Mason employed any lawyer, and in the next—’

‘Well, well; it does not matter. It is usual among the profession; but it does not in the least signify. Mr. Mason has written to us, and he says that you have found out something about that Orley Farm business.’

‘Yes; I have found out something. At least, I rather think so.’

‘Well, what is it, Mr. Dockwrath?’

‘Ah! that’s the question. It’s rather a ticklish business, Mr. Round: a family affair, as I may say.’

‘Whose family?’

‘To a certain extent my family, and to a certain extent Mr. Mason’s family. I don’t know how far I should be justified in laying all the facts before you—wonderful facts they are too—’

in an off-hand way like that. These matters have to be considered a great deal. It is not only the extent of the property. There is much more than that in it, Mr. Round.'

'If you don't tell me what there is in it, I don't see what we are to do. I am sure you did not give yourself the trouble of coming up here from Hamworth merely with the object of telling us that you are going to hold your tongue.'

'Certainly not, Mr. Round.'

'Then what did you come to say?'

'May I ask you, Mr. Round, what Mr. Mason has told you with reference to my interview with him?'

'Yes; I will read you a part of his letter—"Mr. Dockwrath is of opinion that the will under which the estate is now enjoyed is absolutely a forgery." I presume you mean the codicil, Mr. Dockwrath?'

'Oh yes! the codicil of course.'

'And he has in his possession documents which I have not seen, but which seem to me, as described, to go far to prove that this certainly must have been the case." And then he goes on with a description of dates, although it is clear that he does not understand the matter himself—indeed he says as much. Now of course we must see these documents before we can give our client any advice.' A certain small portion of Mr. Mason's letter Mr. Round did then read, but he did not read those portions in which Mr. Mason expressed his firm determination to reopen the case against Lady Mason, and even to prosecute her for forgery if it were found that he had anything like a fair chance of success in doing so. 'I know that you were convinced,' he had said, addressing himself personally to Mr. Round senior, 'that Lady Mason was acting in good faith. I was always convinced of the contrary, and am more sure of it now than ever.' This last paragraph, Mr. Round junior had not thought it necessary to read to Mr. Dockwrath.

'The documents to which I allude are in reference to my confidential family matters; and I certainly shall not produce them without knowing on what ground I am standing.'

'Of course you are aware, Mr. Dockwrath, that we could compel you.'

'There, Mr. Round, I must be allowed to differ.'

'It won't come to that, of course. If you have anything worth showing, you'll show it; and if we make use of you as a witness, it must be as a willing witness.'

'I don't think it probable that I shall be a witness in the matter at all.'

'Ah, well; perhaps not. My own impression is that no case will be made out; that there will be nothing to take before a jury.'

'There again, I must differ from you, Mr. Round.'

'Oh, of course! I suppose the real fact is, that it is a matter of money. You want to be paid for what information you have got. That is about the long and the short of it; eh, Mr. Dockwrath?'

'I don't know what you call the long and the short of it, Mr. Round; or what may be your way of doing business. As a professional man, of course I expect to be paid for my work;—and I have no doubt that you expect the same.'

'No doubt, Mr. Dockwrath; but—as you have made the comparison, I hope you will excuse me for saying so—we always wait till our clients come to us.'

Mr. Dockwrath drew himself up with some intention of becoming angry; but he hardly knew how to carry it out; and then it might be a question whether anger would serve his turn. 'Do you mean to say, Mr. Round, if you had found documents such as these, you would have done nothing about them—that you would have passed them by as worthless?'

'I can't say that till I know what the documents are. If I found papers concerning the client of another firm, I should go to that firm if I thought that they demanded attention.'

'I didn't know anything about the firm;—how was I to know?'

'Well! you know now, Mr. Dockwrath. As I understand it, our client has referred you to us. If you have any anything to say, we are ready to hear it. If you have anything to show, we are ready to look at it. If you have nothing to say, and nothing to show—'

'Ah, but I have; only—'

'Only you want us to make it worth your while. We might as well have the truth at once. Is not that about it?'

'I want to see my way, of course.'

'Exactly. And now, Mr. Dockwrath, I must make you understand that we don't do business in that way.'

'Then I shall see Mr. Mason again myself.'

'That you can do. He will be in town next week, and, as I believe, wishes to see you. As regards your expenses, if you can show us that you have any communication to make that is worth our client's attention, we will see that you are paid what you are out of pocket, and some fair remuneration for the time you may have lost;—not as an attorney, remember, for in that light we cannot regard you.'

'I am every bit as much an attorney as you are.'

'No doubt; but you are not Mr. Mason's attorney; and as long as it suits him to honour us with his custom, you cannot be so regarded.'

'That's as he pleases.'

'No; it is not, Mr. Dockwrath. It is as he pleases whether he employs you or us; but it is not as he pleases whether he employs

both on business of the same class. He may give us his confidence, or he may withdraw it.'

'Looking at the way the matter was managed before, perhaps the latter may be the better for him.'

'Excuse me, Mr. Dockwrath, for saying that that is a question I shall not discuss with you.'

Upon this Mr. Dockwrath jumped from his chair, and took up his hat. 'Good morning to you, sir,' said Mr. Round, without moving from his chair; 'I will tell Mr. Mason that you have declined making any communication to us. He will probably know your address—if he should want it.'

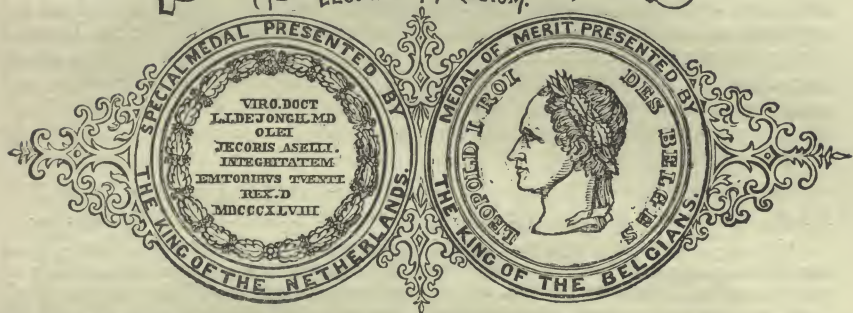
Mr. Dockwrath paused. Was he not about to sacrifice substantial advantage to momentary anger? Would it not be better that he should carry this impudent young London lawyer with him if it were possible? 'Sir,' said he, 'I am quite willing to tell you all that I know of this matter at present, if you will have the patience hear it.'

'Patience, Mr. Dockwrath! Why I am made of patience. Sit down again, Mr. Dockwrath, and think of it.'

Mr. Dockwrath did sit down again, and did think of it; and it ended in his telling to Mr. Round all that he had told to Mr. Mason. As he did so, he looked closely at Mr. Round's face, but there he could read nothing. 'Exactly,' said Mr. Round. 'The fourteenth of July is the date of both. I have taken a memorandum of that. A final deed for closing partnership, was it? I have got that down. John Kenneby and Bridget Bolster. I remember the names,—witnesses to both deeds, were they? I understand; nothing about this other deed was brought up at the trial? I see the point—such as it is. John Kennedy and Bridget Bolster;—both believed to be living. Oh, you can give their address, can you? Decline to do so now? Very well; it does not matter. I think I understand it all now, Mr. Dockwrath; and when we want you again, you shall hear from us. Samuel Dockwrath, is it? Thank you. Good morning. If Mr. Mason wishes to see you, he will write, of course. Good day, Mr. Dockwrath.'

And so Mr. Dockwrath went home, not quite contented with his day's work.

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[TURN OVER.]

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